

IOWA BIRD LIFE

Fall 1999 Volume 69 Number 4



IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

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CONTENTS

BIRDS AND BIRDING IN IOWA, 1949--1999	109
<i>Thomas H. Kent</i>	
A MASSIVE MIGRATION OF WATERBIRDS THROUGH IOWA IN NOVEMBER 1998.....	117
<i>James J. Dinsmore and William R. Clark</i>	
FIFTY YEARS AGO IN IOWA BIRD LIFE	122
FIELD REPORTS--SUMMER 1999.....	123
<i>James J. Dinsmore</i>	
BLACK-NECKED STILTS IN BOONE COUNTY	131
<i>James J. Dinsmore</i>	
BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK IN LOUISA COUNTY.....	131
<i>Thomas H. Kent</i>	
WHOOING CRANES IN HARRISON COUNTY	132
<i>Mindy L. Sheets and James J. Dinsmore</i>	
ARCTIC TERNS AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR: A FIRST FOR IOWA....	133
<i>Stephen J. Dinsmore and James J. Dinsmore</i>	
BOOK REVIEW.....	135
<i>Field Guide to the Birds of North America</i>	
I.O.U. BUSINESS	136
<i>Fall Business Meeting, 11 September 1999</i>	
NOTE FROM THE EDITOR.....	137
MEET KAY NIYO	139

FRONT COVER: Whooping Cranes near DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge, Harrison County, 11 April 1999. Photo by Don Poggensee.

INSIDE BACK COVER: Editorial Staff, Subscription/Membership Information, Instructions to Authors, Officers, Board of Directors, Standing Committees.

BACK COVER: Meeting Dates, Report Deadlines, Birdline, Materials Available.

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BIRDS AND BIRDING IN IOWA, 1949--1999

THOMAS H. KENT

May 14 and 15, 1949, marked my formal introduction to birding in Iowa when I attended with my parents my first Iowa Ornithologists' Union meeting at the Heights Hotel on the north bluff above the town of McGregor. Among the 159 registrants were many that I now know contributed much to Iowa ornithology, but at the time I did not know them, and, regretfully, many I did not see again. Over the next four years I was an active birder, spending my summers photographing birds and weekends on birding trips with my father and others. My father continued making weekly charts of birds seen until 1973 (Kent and Kent 1975). After 1973, my father birded only occasionally until his death in 1984 at the age of 90. I picked up the banner again in 1976 and have birded Iowa extensively since that time.

With the year 2000 approaching, I decided to record my perception of the changes that have occurred in (1) the intensity of birding activity, (2) the habitat, and (3) the birds. Knowledge of birds present in Iowa is a function of birding activity, which was much less intense in 1949 than it is today. Although the attendance at the 1949 spring meeting would be considered very good by today's standard, the individuals involved were mostly local birders who had never contemplated a "big year" or driving across the state to see a rare bird.

Our "big day" spring count, usually with Dr. and Mrs. Robert Vane and Dr. and Mrs. Peter Laude, started with a walk at a nearby farm, followed by my Mother's pancake breakfast, and then a leisurely trip to Swan Lake and west to the Amanas. Such a trip on 9 May 1954 yielded 120 species. In the 1960s and early 1970s I would take vacation during mid-May and bird with my father. We would usually do a big day, starting at daybreak at Cone Marsh, followed by the Coralville Reservoir and Amanas later. Our best count was 131 on 13 May 1967. Beginning in 1976, big days became my prized activity of the year with much more planning, early starts (3 a.m.), and much more travel. My best count, on 13 May 1988 with Carl Bendorf, Francis Moore, and Dick Tetrault, yielded 160 species.



*Fred and Tom Kent at Lake Macbride
26 December 1949*

Others have achieved higher totals. Carl Bendorf (1986) described one of our typical Big Days.

Although my father and I tallied up the number of species we had seen at the end of each year from 1949 to 1973, we had not been introduced to the concept of a "big year". The high yearly count was 221 in 1961 and the total number of species in Eastern Iowa was 270 for the 25-year period (Kent and Kent 1975). By 1976, I had only seen 252 species in Iowa. During the period 1949 to 1973 few trips were made away from the home base in Eastern Iowa, we did not think in terms of looking for vagrants, and the major reservoirs that attract so many unusual birds were just being built.



Cedar Rapids Bird Club lunch at Lake Macbride, 18 December 1949. From left: Bob Vane, Al Meyer, unidentified, Pete Laude, Dick Turner, Tom Kent, Marguerite Laude, Knute Nomland, and Fred Kent.

The formation of the American Birding Association (ABA) in 1969, with a call for life, state, and annual lists, resulted in a profound and rapid change that converted many "bird watchers" into "birders" or "listers". Although I started a "life list" about 1950, my father never did; however, of the Iowa lists, first reported to the ABA in 1970, his was the highest with 275. My life list began to expand after a 1973 trip to Texas and after that almost yearly trips to locations outside of Iowa, stimulated in part by ABA's magazine *Birding*.

The first annual list total for Iowa reported to the ABA was 171 by Ruth Zollars (later Phipps) in 1971. Nicholas Halmi reported yearly totals of 210 and 230 in 1974 and 1977. More concentrated efforts in 1978, 1979, and 1981 produced totals of 239, 253, and 278 (Kent, Halmi and Shires 1979; Shires and Kent 1980; Kent 1982). Based on annual lists published by the ABA (which, of course, does not include all those who made such efforts), the number of individuals reporting rose from 4 in 1979 to a peak of 16 in 1989, 1991, and 1992. New record totals were set in 1984 (282, Francis Moore), 1985 (295, Steve Dinsmore), 1991 (299, Eugene and Eloise

Armstrong), 1992 (300, Tom Kent), 1994 (304, Eugene and Eloise Armstrong), 1995 (315, Tom Kent), and 1997 (319, Eugene and Eloise Armstrong).

The number of species recorded in Iowa (based on currently accepted records and current taxonomy) rose by 22 from 1949 to 1974 (323 to 345) and by 56 from 1976 to 1998 (345 to 401, with two more pending in 1999). The number of individuals reporting Iowa Life List totals to the ABA rose from 6 in 1970 to 12 in 1974, to 18 in 1975, and then gradually rose to a peak of 46 in 1991 and 1992. The highest total was 275 in 1970 and 371 in 1998.

All these data indicate greatly increased birding activity beginning about 1975. Publications also reflect the increase in data on occurrence of birds in Iowa, beginning with publication of "Field Reports" in *Iowa Bird Life* in 1960 by Woody Brown and continued by editors Nick Halmi (1976 to 1979) and Tom Kent and others (1979 to present). An additional boost in the number of birds reported occurred after publication of *Iowa Birds* (Dinsmore et al. 1984).



Road at Cone Marsh, 12 March 1949. Many roads that are now well graveled made birding more difficult in 1949.

In addition to increased effort, Iowa birders have become more knowledgeable and experienced in bird identification, aided in part by new and better books, binoculars, telescopes, and recording devices. The formation of a Records Committee in 1980 to review rare bird sightings has focused more attention on identification. Research and publication of information on frequency and distribution of birds in Iowa (Grant 1963, Brown 1971, Dinsmore et al. 1984, Kent and Dinsmore 1996) has encouraged reporting of birds at unusual times and in large numbers. Very clear in my mind is the increased appreciation of fall birding. We used to look for fall warblers in deep woods long after the peak of their migration in late August and early September. I

now enjoy fall birding from late June to early January. Birding now supersedes football.

Although the basic functions of automobiles and the distribution of roads in Iowa have not changed much in 50 years, the attitude toward travel and the interstate highway system have made it commonplace to drive across the state to see a bird. Travel between major cities takes about half as long as it used to. The quality of paved and graveled roads has also improved. When I grew up, communication about bird sightings was mostly among local birders, rarely to others by letter or postcard. Long distance telephone calls were considered a luxury. The Iowa Birdline, started in 1981 by Rick Hollis and continued by Carl Bendorf, Bob Cecil, and Jim Fuller, both stimulated and provided information for birders to "chase" rare birds. E-mail became available in the early 1990s and will soon surpass the telephone as a means of disseminating information concerning bird sightings.

The habitat for birds in Iowa has changed considerably since I started birding in 1949. At that time, as today, most of Iowa was used for agriculture, but at that time oat and hay fields were more abundant and crops were rotated; most farms had livestock; and more hedgerows were present. Farmers were less concerned about trespassers. In fact, I used to dread the times when my father stopped the car to look at a bird where a farmer was working, because the farmer would often stop his tractor and visit with us for as long as he could. The species that I miss most from that habitat is the Loggerhead Shrike, whose nests were easily found in the hedgerows.



Tom Kent photographing Northern Saw-whet Owl at Lake Macbride, 1 December 1951.

The most striking changes in habitat resulted from the filling of Iowa's four major reservoirs: Coralville (1958), Rathbun (1969), Red Rock (1969), and Saylorville (1975). The Department of Natural Resources has greatly expanded the wetland areas in Iowa over the last 50 years. An outstanding example is the Riverton Area in Fremont County, which was created in 1941 but greatly expanded in 1972 to become an outstanding birding spot. The major wetlands that I visited in the 1950s were spectacular: Cone Marsh (our favorite water bird area), Forney Lake (mud roads and massive numbers of geese), and the Ruthven Area (nesting rails, bitterns, and terns). Now there are many more areas for water birds. The increase in water areas, with

restricted hunting in some, has provided more opportunity for birders to observe waterfowl in the fall. Many county parks with ponds were developed, beginning in the 1960s, including one named after my father.

The amount of habitat available for passerines has also increased. For example, Hickory Hill Park in Iowa City, a park my father never visited, has been ideal for spring and fall migrants. There are now similar parks near most major cities. The number of bird feeders has greatly increased since 1949, attracting a number of vagrant species.

People often suggest to me that changes in the environment have been detrimental to the birds, but my impression is that birding is much better than it used to be. Aside from the increased acreage allocated to corn and soybeans, cleaner edges to fields, and the DDT era, which killed many birds and affected raptor reproduction, the habitat and environment appears to me to be much better for birds today than in 1949.



Pete Petersen and Nick Halm at Oelwein waiting for Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, 19 March 1978.

This was my first trip to chase a vagrant in Iowa.

Changes in Iowa birdlife over 50 years may be more apparent than real due to the factors mentioned above. The most apparent change to me is the occurrence of vagrants (wanderers), some of which are now regular (occur nearly every year). Until 1977 I had little awareness of vagrants and had only encountered two in Iowa (Black Rail in 1961 and Purple Gallinule in 1964). Since then I have encountered or gone to see 66 vagrant species (and more that were considered vagrants when first seen). This reflects many of the birds that were added to the state list over the last 25 years. Vagrants were found in Iowa in the 1800s, such as Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch in 1883, Sabine's Gull in 1891, and Thick-billed Murre in 1896. By my calculation, 28 vagrants were added to the state list from 1900 to 1974 and at least 49 since then (not counting species that became regular). This phenomenon has been noted all over the country. It is not at all clear how much of this increase is due to increased birding activity and awareness, and some of the increase is also due to environmental factors; e.g., gulls prospering on human waste and reservoirs. The persistent efforts and skills of a few individuals, such as Steve Dinsmore, have accounted for a number of the records of vagrants.

The increase in gulls in Iowa is the second most impressive change. Until 1979, I had seen only four species in Iowa: Ring-billed (a few migrated in the Iowa River valley), Herring (seen on the Mississippi in winter), Franklin's (few following plows in eastern Iowa, many in western Iowa), and Bonaparte's (rare, I saw my first in 1967). These species are now all abundant, and I have seen an additional 14 species, most at reservoirs.

Bald Eagles were rarely seen except along the Mississippi River in the 1950s, and the effects of DDT caused them to be even rarer in the 1960s. The numbers now

greatly exceed those of the 1950s, and they are nesting all over the state. American Kestrels are also much more common than before their decline. The same can be said for migrant Peregrine Falcons and Merlins. Prairie Falcons have become regular winter residents since 1977, after being irregular prior to 1966 and absent for 10 years.

Several species that have moved into Iowa for the first time and have become established include House Finch (1982), Great-tailed Grackle (1983), and Eurasian Tree Sparrow (1987). Trumpeter Swan and Wild Turkey have returned to state with the aid of man. Wild Turkey is now abundant (I saw my first in 1978). Mississippi Kite returned to Iowa in 1978 after an absence of 71 years, and now is regular at Des Moines.



Mike Newlon, Rich DeCoster, and Tom Staudt at Cone Marsh on 30 April 1978, the day we found my first Yellow Rail. These were the long-hair days.

Many water birds have been seen with increased frequency in the last 25 years: loons (I used to see only a few), grebes, American White Pelican (formerly rare in Eastern Iowa, now abundant), Double-crested Cormorant (once considered endangered, now abundant and nesting), Cattle Egret (I saw my first in 1973), White-faced Ibis (I saw my first in 1981), Ross's Goose, Canada Goose (massive increase in nesting and wintering birds following restoration program), Wood Duck, Cinnamon Teal, scoters, Hooded Merganser, and Sandhill Crane (now a regular migrant and nesting), as well as shorebirds, gulls, and terns. Turkey Vulture numbers are also greatly increased, and they have expanded to the northwest. The range of Gray Partridge expanded, but has retracted a bit in the last few years.

Although I saw most of the shorebirds in the 1950s, they appeared to be less abundant due to limited available habitat, especially in fall. Now shorebirding is usually good in both spring and fall.

It is much more difficult for me to judge the abundance of passerines. Some of the species that seem to be more common include Tree Swallow (nesting greatly increased after construction of reservoirs), Cliff Swallow (formerly limited to a few

locations, now abundant nesting on bridges), Eastern Bluebird (due in part to the houses erected for them), Townsend's Solitaire, Varied Thrush, Yellow-throated Warbler (definite range expansion, I saw my first in 1979), Prairie Warbler, Hooded Warbler, and Henslow's Sparrow (many new locations in recent years), and Smith's Longspur (regular since I found them in 1981).



A typical fall trip to Lock & Dam 9 in Allamakee County on 17 November 1984. From left to right: Bob Myers, Francis Moore, Tom Staudt, and Bob Cecil.

Species that are found more often due in part to a knowledge of their location or habitat include: Golden Eagle (wintering in northeastern Iowa), Yellow Rail (Snake Creek Marsh), Piping Plover, Least Tern, Chuck-will's-widow, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (Snake Creek Marsh and other locations).

A few species appear to be less common than in the 1950s: American Bittern, Least Bittern, Red-shouldered Hawk (seen regularly in the 1950s), Northern Bobwhite (I used to hear them in town in Iowa City), King Rail (now very rare), Long-eared Owl, Short-eared Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker (most common summer woodpecker, but numbers may have dropped in last few years), Loggerhead Shrike, Purple Martin, Bewick's Wren (nested in Iowa City in the 1950s), Grasshopper Sparrow (less habitat and I cannot hear them anymore), Dickcissel, Bobolink, and Purple Finch (seems much less common to me).

The most striking seasonal change is the widespread occurrence of waterfowl and other water birds in winter. For example, on Iowa City Christmas Bird Counts, ducks were encountered in only three years from 1951 to 1957 (Mallard twice, Lesser Scaup once) compared to an average of about 10 species in the 1990s. In the early years, before the construction of reservoirs and the use of aerators, the rivers and ponds were typically frozen by Christmas and there were no "park" Mallards in Iowa City. Some passerines have become more common in winter, especially Mourning Doves in urban areas. Fall birding has become as much fun as spring birding for me with its successive waves of shorebirds, warblers, sparrows, waterfowl, and gulls. Fall is also the season with the most records of vagrants and variety of plumages to test identifications skills. In my early years, summer was a time to find birds at their nests and photograph them. In recent years, my summer birding has been limited, and my ability to participate in breeding surveys is compromised by hearing loss.



The Records Committee, Marshalltown, 18 May 1985. From left to right: Darwin Koenig, Pete Petersen, Barb Wilson, Jim Dinsmore, Bob Myers, and Joe Schaufenbuel.

It is difficult to judge how aging has affected my observations and perception of birds over a 50-year period. Decreased mobility, loss of high-pitched hearing, and perhaps some loss of visual acuity are offset by more affluence (no travel restrictions, better equipment), more time (reduced commitments, retirement), and more knowledge and experience. Overall, however, birds have prospered over the period. What will the next 50 years bring?

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A MASSIVE MIGRATION OF WATERBIRDS THROUGH IOWA IN NOVEMBER 1998

JAMES J. DINSMORE AND WILLIAM R. CLARK

An intense weather front that swept across the northern Great Plains in early November 1998 produced one of the greatest mass migrations of waterfowl and perhaps the largest migration of Sandhill Cranes recorded in Iowa in this century. Mass-migrations of waterfowl have been reported in Iowa previously. The Armistice Day storm of 11 November 1940, was best known for the significant loss of human life. Most of those losses were duck hunters who were taking advantage of a huge migration of waterfowl moving south ahead of the blizzard (Madson 1995). A massive movement of waterfowl was noted throughout the Great Plains in early November 1955 when hundreds of thousands of ducks and geese apparently moved nonstop from southern Canada to the Gulf Coast in response to a storm moving through Canada (Bellrose 1957). Another massive migration of waterfowl through Iowa was noted on 24-26 November 1957 (Sieh 1958). More recently, the Halloween storm of 1991 also caused large numbers of waterfowl to move south (Till 1994). Here we attempt to summarize some aspects of the movement of waterfowl and cranes through Iowa in early November 1998.

METHODS

We contacted numerous biologists, hunters, conservation officers, and birders who were in the field on the day of the storm or in the two days immediately after it and collected information from them on where they had been, what species they had seen, and how many were present. Many also commented on the direction of flight of flocks passing overhead. We also received information from the Iowa DNR's weekly waterfowl surveys taken by biologists throughout Iowa.

THE STORM

The storm was triggered by the passage of an intense low pressure system that moved across the Dakotas and Minnesota on Tuesday, 10 November. The barometric pressure at Spencer dropped to 28.54 inches of mercury, an all-time low for that station. Throughout Tuesday, strong winds from the northwest and west, blew across Iowa. Sustained winds of 40 mph with gusts in excess of 60 mph were recorded throughout Iowa. With the center of the intense low pressure system located northeast of Iowa at 9 p.m. Tuesday, 10 November, the wind directions were uniquely aligned to produce the observed movements of birds. At this time the National Weather Service recorded strong north and northwesterly winds throughout the Dakotas bending strongly around the low so that the winds were from the west across Iowa (Fig. 1). Although precipitation was fairly light across most of Iowa, as much as 10 inches of snow fell in extreme northwestern Iowa as well as in parts of the Dakotas and Minnesota. Some weather experts said the intensity of the storm was comparable to that of Hurricane George which hit the Gulf Coast earlier in the fall.

Prior to the storm, it had been a very mild fall with little southward movement of waterfowl and cranes. Most ducks, Snow Geese, and Sandhill Cranes that normally move south through the Great Plains were still in southern Canada (Dale Caswell, Canadian Wildlife Service, pers. commun.) or the Dakotas (Mike Johnson, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, pers. commun.) when the storm hit. The

blizzard-like conditions of the storm pushed the birds south and, with the strong winds from the west, tens of thousands of birds apparently were displaced to the east.

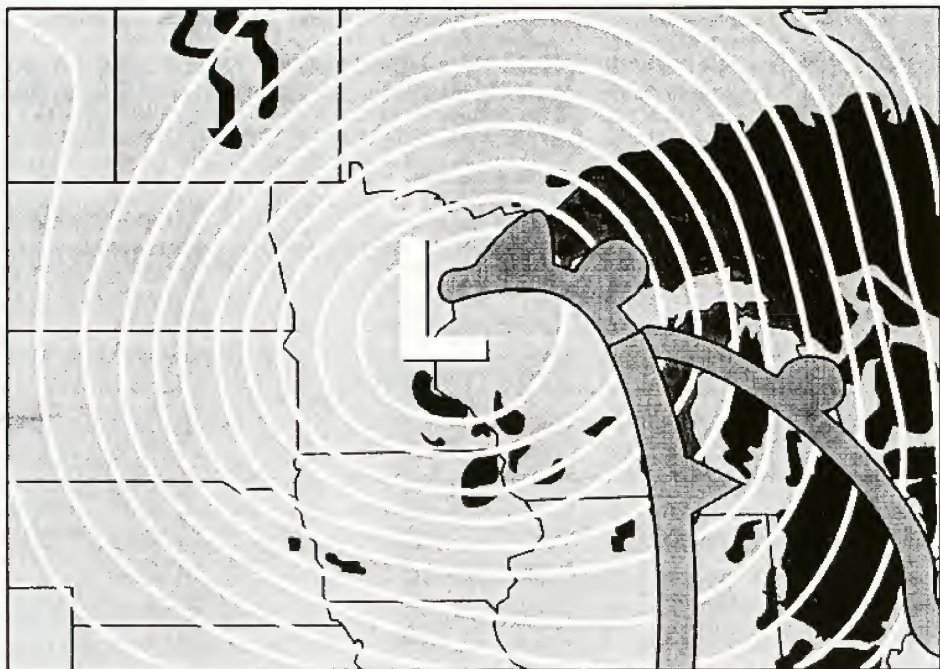


Figure 1. Location of low pressure center and pressure isobars at 4:20 p.m. on 10 Nov 1998. The close spacing of the isobars in Iowa and the Dakotas produced the high winds associated with this front. The alignment of the isobars produced winds from the west and northwest across Iowa.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

By the afternoon of the 10th, observers were hearing large flocks of Snow Geese passing over in the storm but the main fallout was not evident until the 11th which fortuitously was a holiday (Veterans Day). Many people were hunting both days, and they reported seeing massive flocks of ducks, geese, and to a lesser extent, Sandhill Cranes. Tens of thousands of Snow Geese were reported from throughout Iowa, far east of their usual Missouri River fall migration path. Likewise, thousands of ducks were reported statewide, whereas the previous week few had been present. By the 12th, the movement had subsided considerably although both Snow Geese and Sandhill Cranes were still seen migrating.

We first heard reports of the migration beginning on 10 November when we received calls from several DNR employees and hunters from around Iowa who commented on the number of waterfowl they had seen. A few calls to others who were in the field those days quickly revealed that the migration was extensive and involved cranes as well as waterfowl.

SNOW GEESE

The most obvious aspect of this massive migration was the large movement of Snow Geese into Iowa. Observers from throughout Iowa reported many flocks of Snow Geese passing over, beginning on 10 November and continuing throughout the 11th. For instance, Clark observed constant movement of waterfowl, particularly Snow Geese, along the Skunk River near Cambridge between 2:00 and 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, 10 November. He conservatively estimated the passage of 2,000 Snow Geese during that time, most fighting the wind but being blown to the southeast. Reports of numerous migrating and resting flocks of Snow Geese came in from DNR personnel in almost every unit throughout the state. Bill Ohde reported seeing more Snow Geese in the Odessa Unit in southeastern Iowa on 11 November than he had in the previous 15 autumns combined. On the morning of 11 November, Clark observed Snow Goose flocks flying westward over the Cambridge location along the Skunk River. Similar observations of geese flying westward to "get back on course" were reported on the same day from Big Marsh and Bays Branch wildlife areas.

DUCKS

The migration of ducks was also spectacular on Tuesday afternoon and throughout Wednesday. Large flocks of Mallards moved into the state during the storm. Significant numbers of Gadwall, American Wigeon, and Green-winged Teal were also reported. Although some large rafts of divers were reported on large lakes and reservoirs in the state, apparently the number of these birds moving with this storm was not as great as the late migrant dabblers. Observations from hunters suggested that many of the ducks sighted had migrated from great distances under severe weather conditions. Clark observed flocks of Mallards dropping out of the clouds directly on to a small pond near Cambridge where they immediately dropped their heads and began to drink. Clark also received a report of a drake Mallard shot at Big Wall Lake on Tuesday afternoon that had barley in its crop. The nearest counties where substantial barley is harvested are in North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota (USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service) suggesting that this bird could have migrated from great distance in a short time.

SANDHILL CRANES

One of the more fascinating aspects of the migration was the large number of Sandhill Cranes that were seen. Numerous observers reported cranes from as far east as the Mississippi River. We compiled 51 reports of cranes from at least 26 Iowa counties (Appendix A). Conservatively, these reports account for at least 3,100 Sandhill Cranes on the 11th and 530 on the 12th. Almost certainly, many more passed throughout unreported. Most striking were reports of more than 500 moving south near Council Bluffs and two or three flocks per hour passing over southwestern Iowa, both on the 11th.

Most of the reports were from 11 November, the day after the strong winds and a day when many hunters were in the field and in places where they were likely to see cranes. Interestingly, a number of the observers noticed that on the 11th, cranes that were seen in localities fairly far east in Iowa were flying west or southwest as if they were returning to their normal migration pathway in central Nebraska. For instance, Mel Moe and other DNR employees in Ringgold County noticed the flocks they saw in that area were moving west southwest. In contrast, the large groups that Babs and

Loren Padelford saw at Hitchcock Nature Center overlooking the Missouri River valley north of Council Bluffs were moving south.

DISCUSSION

It seems clear that the combination of an unusually warm fall preceding this intense storm set up ideal conditions for a mass migration of waterfowl and cranes. With no snow cover and much food available, most Snow Geese, ducks, and Sandhill Cranes lingered in southern Canada well into November rather than moving south in late October as they usually do. The arrival of this intense storm on 10 November, accompanied by high winds, low temperatures, and snow forced the birds to resume their southward migration. The strong westerly winds undoubtedly had an effect on the birds once they became airborne and pushed many of them further east than their normal fall migration routes across the central Great Plains. Thus, Snow Geese, which in recent years have become increasingly scarce in fall in Iowa outside of the Missouri River valley, were pushed into central and even eastern Iowa. Likewise Sandhill Cranes, which normally move through central Nebraska, were displaced far to the east and were reported in much greater numbers in Iowa than anytime in recent years. Indeed, it is likely that on the 11th, Iowa probably had more Sandhill Cranes within its borders than on any other day in this century. The numerous observations of birds flying to the west or southwest after the winds had subsided suggest that the birds were returning to their usual pathway after having been displaced to the east.

The timing and magnitude of this population movement reinforces our understanding of the effect that weather has on the migration of waterfowl and other birds. Especially in fall, the major southward movement of many of these species is associated with similar weather events. The 1998 event was unusual in its magnitude, its relative lateness in the season, the large number of observers who were afield during the event, and the fact that cranes were also pushed into Iowa.

We thank the numerous individuals who provided us with details on their observations of birds associated with this storm. Without their collective records, the magnitude of this migration would have been unappreciated.

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Appendix A. Sandhill Crane sightings associated with November 1998 storm.

11 November 1998

County	Location	Number	Observer	Notes
Appanoose	Rathbun W.A.	ca 35	Todd Bishop	flew over
Boone	near Ia. arboretum	ca 16	Bill Fibley	moving W
Clay	Barringer Slough	100-150	Marty Eby	flying SW
Clay	Dan Green Slough	8-10	Marty Eby	
Clay	Smith Slough	3	Dave Hoffman	flew over
Fremont	Riverton/Forney L area	2-3 flocks per hour, flocks	Carl Priebe	flying south
Greene	Goose Lake	?	Aaron Hershberger	heard overhead
Greene	Dunbar Sl.	?	fide A. Hershberger	seen
Guthrie	Lakin Slough	3 groups 5-15 each	Mike Klein	
Guthrie	n of L. Panorama	50-100	fide hunter to Mike Klein	flew over
Johnson	Hawkeye W.A.	35	Tim Thompson	flew over
Johnson	Coralville Res.	30	Tom Kent	flew over
Louisa	Cone Marsh	flocks of 28 and 22 birds	John Cherry (fide Bill Ohde)	flying south
Lucas	Rathbun W.A.	25	Ed White	
Lucas	near Chariton	3	Michelle Priebe	flew over
Lucas	s. of Chariton near Derby	ca 100	Jim Priebe	flew over
Lyon	Lyon County	several flocks	Craig Van Otterloo	
Marion	Red Rock	40	Chuck Kakac	heading SW
Marion	Red Rock	ca 200	Drew Schmidt	flew over
Marion	Runnells W.A.	6 and 4	Aaron Brees	flew over
Marion	east of Swan	11	Aaron Brees	flew over
Marion	Red Rock Dam	3 and 34	Aaron Brees	flew over
Marshall	Grammer Grove	3 flocks-- 8 birds	Mark Proescholdt	flew over
Monroe	near Albia	30-50	hunter, fide Chuck Kakac	flew over
O'Brien	e of Sutherland along Little Sioux R	4 flocks 320-350 birds	Darwin Koenig	flying over
Plymouth	n of Westfield	ca 100	fide Russ Reisz	flying south
Polk	Chichaqua W.A.	25	Steve Lekwa	
Polk	Saylorville Res.	4	P. Peterson-Keys	near bridge
Polk	n of Big Creek L.	ca 15	Amy Yoakum	flying south
Polk	n. of Saylorville Res e of highway 17	70-80	Craig Lonneman	in field
Pottawattamie	Hitchcock W.A.	540	Babs & Loren Padelford	flying south
Ringgold	Mt. Ayr area	4 flocks of ca 50 each	Mel Moe	moving WSW

Ringgold	south of Mt Ayr	ca 300	Allan Taylor	mid morning
Sac	Tomahawk Marsh	2 flocks	Mike Mahn	moving SW
		one with ca 12		
Sac	over Lake View	3 flocks	Lannie Miller	flew over
Sac	w of Black Hawk M	12-15 flocks	Jim Wallace	flew over
		9-30 birds/flock		
Story	Hallett's Quarry	18	Wolf Oesterrriech	flying south
Story	Izaak Walton Park	20	Bill Fribley	moving west
Tama	Otter Creek Marsh	10 flocks	Mike Stegmann	flying SE
		ca 20/flock		
Union	3 Mile Lake	4 or 5 flocks	Ron Munkel	flew over
		250-300 birds		
Wright	Big Wall Lake	3	Steve Cordts	flew over
12 November 1998				
Clay	Barringer Slough	100-150	Marty Eby	flying SW
Clay	Dan Green Slough	8-10	Marty Eby	
Clay	Smith Slough	12	Dave Hoffmna	
Dallas	Dallas Center	10	Terry Shephard	flew over
Davis	e of Pulaski	ca. 250	Richard Tebbs	in soybean
			(fide Bill Ohde)	field
Fremont	Riverton/Forney L	still lots of	Carl Priebe	flying south,
	area	birds		stopped 2 p.m.
Jasper	Runnells W.A.	1, 2	Eugene & Eloise	
			Armstrong	
Louisa	n of Columbus Jct	36	John Cherry	in soybean
			(fide Bill Ohde)	field
Marshall	w. part of county	2	Aaron Brees	flew over
Pottawattamie	Hitchcock W.A.	111	Babs & Loren	flying south
			Padelford	

FIFTY YEARS AGO IN IOWA BIRD LIFE

Some topics seem to be eternal. The December 1949 issue of *Iowa Bird Life* has articles on two such topics related to birds. One, by Thomas Feeney, discusses some of the differences between birders (bird-watchers in his day) and ornithologists. He argues that birders should not try to be ornithologists and that the former seldom make significant contributions to science. As one who can claim to be both a birder and an ornithologist, I would argue to the contrary; birders often can make significant contributions (see below). The second topic is subspecies. The writer, William Youngworth, argues that birders should resist the temptation to try to attach a subspecific name to every bird they see. Although subspecies generally were of less interest for many years, in recent decades there has been increased interest in them because in many cases, apparent subspecies are now being considered as separate species. Knowledge obtained by birders on the distribution of many of these "subspecies" has helped scientists understand their distribution and movements.--ed.

FIELD REPORTS--SUMMER 1999

JAMES J. DINSMORE

WEATHER

June was fairly normal as summers go. It was a bit wetter than usual but without some of the extreme storms that have hit Iowa in recent summers. Temperatures dropped into the 40s a few nights in mid June but by the end of the month daily highs into the 90s were reported in much of the state.

July was hotter than recent summers in terms of the weather extremes we received. Most noticeable was the extended hot weather that covered much of Iowa for much of July. Daily highs often reached the high 80s or 90s and reached 107 at Keosauqua on 29 July, the highest temperature in Iowa since July 1995. Overall, it was the 16th hottest July on record. Although parts of Iowa were somewhat parched, a band of storms that moved across northern Iowa in mid July dropped lots of rain, topped off by 9 inches that fell near Manly on 19 July and 18.5 inches in Charles City during the month. This led to extensive flooding on the Cedar and other rivers, some of which topped the levels reached in 1993.



HABITAT CONDITIONS

As is typical, the big question is what effect, if any, did this weather and other factors have on nesting by birds. I suspect that for many species, it was a relatively normal year which would lead to reasonable nesting success. I assume that any ground-nesting birds nesting or renesting in north-central and northeastern Iowa in mid July probably had little success. The water conditions on most wetlands that I visited in June in north-central and northwestern Iowa appeared to be great, and nesting success for species that use those habitats should have been good. Although the acreage in the Conservation Reserve Program in Iowa are close to the peaks recorded a few years ago, the location of those acres has changed dramatically. Much of the land once enrolled in northern Iowa has returned to rowcrops, and the CRP lands are now increasingly found in southern Iowa.

Somewhat counteracting this has been the continued acquisition of land through several federal programs. Two of the most active programs in Iowa, the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture (PPJV) of the North American Waterfowl Management Plant and the Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program (EWRP) of the Natural Resources Conservation Service have continued to add public land in Iowa. Through 1998, the PPJV had acquired about 30,000 acres in Iowa and had restored wetland conditions to more than 1,500 basins on those lands. These include new areas such as Dugout Creek, Harrier Marsh, and Teal Basin as well as large additions to more familiar areas such as Spring Run, Snake Creek Marsh, and Dunbar Slough. The EWRP, though generally less known, has acquired some 87,000 acres in Iowa, much of it along the floodplains of the lower Iowa, Skunk, and other rivers that were ravaged in 1993 flood. Although less familiar to many birders, these lands too have great potential as habitat for many Iowa bird species. The EWRP is already moving into

the prairie regions of north-central Iowa and plans for that area include some major acquisitions.

UNUSUAL SPECIES

The most unusual species reported this summer, Ruff and Lark Bunting, await review by the Records Committee. The only Casual species reported was Black-headed Gull which was found in the Spirit Lake region for the fourth successive summer. Other good finds were a first-ever summer Red-throated Loon, a late Red-necked Grebe, two Greater Scaup, a first-ever July Merlin, King Rail, Burrowing Owl, two Red-breasted Nuthatches, Bewick's Wren, Golden-winged Warbler, and Clay-colored Sparrow.

Among the nesting species, it was a good year for Northern Harrier, Sandhill Crane, Barn Owl, and Henslow's Sparrow. Blue Grosbeaks showed some evidence of an eastward range expansion. It was also a great year for several grassland-nesting species. Several observers noted the great number of Sedge Wrens, Dickcissels, and Bobolinks, especially in northern Iowa.

It appeared to me that coverage this summer was somewhat less intense than in past years. That may account for the relatively few reports of woodland species like Whip-poor-will, Veery, Worm-eating Warbler, and Hooded Warbler. However, I do wonder about species like Common Nighthawk and Grasshopper Sparrow which, to me, appear less common now than a few years ago.

Unlike the past two summers, other than the usual July shorebirds, there were few migrants to report. Only a few warblers, flycatchers, and shorebirds lingered into June. Also, the shorebird migration was pretty lackluster with no real exciting finds and relatively little to report.

SPECIES DATA

* = documented, [] = record date

Red-throated Loon: 1 at Spirit L. on 28 Jun is the first summer report of this species for Iowa (*LAS)

Common Loon: All: 1 in basic plumage on Spirit L. on 28 Jun, 7 and 11 Jul (LAS, MPr, ETH) and 1 at West Okoboji on 17, 21 Jun, 11 Jul (NBe, JJo).

Pied-billed Grebe: Evidence of nesting was noted in Boone, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Palo Alto, and Polk counties (JJD, LAS, BE).

Red-necked Grebe: 1 at Colo Ponds on 3 Jun (PHA, RIA-details) was the only report.

Western Grebe: All: 1 at Spirit L. from 5 to 24 Jul (ETH, MPr, BPr, LAS) and 1 at Black Hawk L. in Sac Co. in late July (RTh, Mike Mahn fide JJD).

American White Pelican: Small to mid-sized groups were reported in Calhoun, Cerro Gordo, Dickinson, Fremont, Polk, and Winnebago counties (JJD, ETH, NBe, MPr, BKP, LJP, HZ). The only large flock was 150 at Union Sl. NWR on 15 Jul (MCK).

Double-crested Cormorant: The only reports of nesting were 13 nests at Coralville Res. on 21 Jul (THK) and a photo of a nest with young in it in a Great Blue Heron colony at Sweet Marsh in Bremer Co. in June (Darrin Siefken fide BEh). Besides 26 at Union Sl. NWR on 25 Jul (MCK), other reports were of 1 to 4 in Dickinson, Fremont, Greene, Poweshiek, Washington, and Winnebago counties (NBe, BKP, LJP, JJD, DT, DCP).

American Bittern: All: Singles at Otter Creek M. on 25 Jun (MPr) and 29 Jun (THK), at Chichaqua W.A. in Polk Co. on 3 Jul (DT), and 2 at Trumbull L. in Clay Co. on 28 Jun (DCH). One or 2 were also found near Grover L. in Dickinson Co., in NW Kossuth Co., and in a private wetland in NW Palo Alto Co. (RDa).

Least Bittern: Other than the 7 at Otter Creek M. on 13 Jun (MCD) and 5 there on 25 Jun (MPr), all were singles: Spring Run W.A. on 5 Jun (LAS), Chichaqua W.A. on 6 Jun (DT), Hanlontown M. in Worth Co. on 19, 28, 30 Jun (RGo, JLW), and Hales Sl. in Dickinson Co. on 11 Jul (ETH). One or 2 were found near Grovers L., at Deweys Pasture in Clay Co., and in a private wetland in SW Emmet Co. (RDa).

- Great Blue Heron:** The only evidence of a post-breeding concentration was the 41 at Riverton W.A. on 10 Jul (BKP, LJP).
- Great Egret:** 18 at Waubonsie W.A. and 8 at nearby Riverton W.A. in Fremont Co. on 10 Jul was the only report of a post-breeding concentration (BKP, LJP).
- Little Blue Heron:** None reported, a first in the 16 years I have done summer field reports. I did receive a late report of a calico bird near Treynor in Mills Co. on 24 May (Mark Miller fide JJD).
- Cattle Egret:** All: 1 on 6 Jun s. of Iowa City (MCD), 3 at Algona on 14 Jun (MCK), 15 at Fomey L. on 5 Jul (BKP, LJP), and 1 at Cardinal M. on 7 Jul (DeC).
- Green Heron:** Other than 9 at Cardinal M. on 17 Jun (DeC), all reports were of 1 to 3 and came from Allamakee, Dickinson, Henry, Marshall, Polk, Tama, and Winneshiek counties (BPr, MPr, JJo, DCP, BE, PJW, DeC).
- Black-crowned Night-Heron:** All: 9 at Forney L. on 5 Jul (BKP, LJP) and 1 at Saylorville Res. on 12 Jul (PHA, RIA). The only indicate of nesting was from Pleasant Creek near Bellevue in Jackson Co. (J. Stravers fide JJD).
- Yellow-crowned Night-Heron:** All: singles at Sullivan Sl. near Burlington on 5, 6, 14 Jun (JLF, THK, MCD), near Armstrong in Emmet Co. on 26 Jun (MCK) and near Des Moines on 26 Jun (W. Oesterreich fide HZ).
- Turkey Vulture:** Reports of 29 at Algona on 2 Jun (MCK), 18 at Kettleston Hogsback W.A. on 9 Jul (DCH), and 17 in Cass Co. on 24 Jun (MAP) all drew comment, the first two noting the increase in vulture numbers in northern Iowa.
- Greater White-fronted Goose:** All: 1 at Terra L. in Johnston on 3, 11 Jul (BE).
- Snow Goose:** All: 3 summered at Colo Ponds (HZ), 2 were at Dunbar Sl. in Greene Co. on 25 Jul (DT), and single white-phase birds were at Welch L. in Dickinson Co. on 5 Jun (LAS) and s. of Iowa City on 15-24 Jul (MCD).
- Gadwall:** From 1 to 4 were reported in Dickinson, Fremont, Kossuth, and Story counties (JJD, BKP, LJP, MCK), all in June. One in Appanoose Co. on 27 Jun (RLC) was out of its usual range.
- Blue-winged Teal:** Common in NW Iowa (JJD).
- Northern Shoveler:** Broods were reported in July at Union Sl. NWR (MCK), Welch L. WPA (LAS), and Colo Ponds (HZ). Single males were at Cardinal M. on 8, 27 Jun (DeC) and Spring Run W.A. on 20 Jun (JJD) and 2 males were at Errington M. on 12 Jun (BE).
- Northern Pintail:** All 2 broods at Welch L. WPA on 10 Jul (LAS), 5 near Bancroft in Kossuth Co. on 30 Jun (MCK), and 2 at Harrier M. on 31 Jul (JJD).
- Green-winged Teal:** All: 1 at Ankeny Ponds on 15 Jun (THK), 4 near Bancroft in Kossuth Co. on 30 Jun (MCK), and a pair at Errington M. on 3 Jul (BE).
- Redhead:** All reports were from Dickinson Co. including a brood at Spring Run W.A. on 31 Jul (LAS). Pairs were at Grover L. and Kettleston-Hogsback swan pen in June (NBe, JJD).
- Ring-necked Duck:** From 1 to 3 were found in Boone, Dickinson, Pottawattamie, and Winneshiek counties (JJD, NBe, DeC), all in June.
- Greater Scaup:** A male was at Welch L. WPA on 5 Jun, 31 Jul (*LAS) and another was at McIntosh W.A. in Cerro Gordo Co. on 16, 17 Jun (RGo), only the second and third summer records.
- Lesser Scaup:** From 1 to 5 were found in Clay, Dickinson, Fremont, Johnson, O'Brien, Polk, and Story counties (LAS, JJD, BKP, LJP, MCD, DK, BE, DT, HZ).
- Hooded Merganser:** A brood of 3 at Chichaqua W.A. on 6 Jun (DT) was the only report of breeding. Other reports include 14 at Colo Ponds on 17 Jun (HZ, JJD), and reports of 1 or 2 from Dickinson, O'Brien, Pocahontas, Polk, Winnebago, and Winneshiek counties (NBe, LAS, DK, JJD, BE, DeC).
- Common Merganser:** All: a female at the MidAmerican Energy Ponds in Pottawattamie Co. on 9 Jun (JJD).
- Ruddy Duck:** A nest with eggs at Spring Run W.A. in June (R. Dault fide JJD) was the only report of nesting. The 12 at Grover L. on 23 Jun (JJD) and 9 at Union Sl. NWR on 14 Jun (MCK) were the most. Elsewhere, 1 or 2 were reported in Emmet, Polk, and Winneshiek counties (JJD, BE, THK, DeC).
- Osprey:** The attempt to establish a breeding population continued as 4 were released at Hartman Reserve Nat. Center and 4 at Coralville Res. (BEh) in July. One at Saylorville Res. on 13 Jun (DT) was unusual for its mid-summer date. In addition, singles were at Dog Creek P. in O'Brien Co. on 4 Jul (DK), Hallett's Quarry near Ames on 12 Jul (S. Lekwa fide HZ), Spirit L. on 14 Jul (ETH), Trumbull L. on 17 Jul (LAS), and on the Boone R. near Webster City on 19 Jul (KJ). All the latter presumably were migrants.
- Mississippi Kite:** All: Singles over Des Moines on 3, 5, 26 Jun, 5, 15 Jul (PJW) and at Ledges S.P. on 5, 7 Jun, 5 Jul (KJ, RTh).
- Bald Eagle:** Totals are not in yet, but it appeared that Bald Eagles had another record nesting year in Iowa (BEh).

- Northern Harrier:** Five nests were found in switchgrass fields in Lucas Co., one of which was successful (LM). A nest at Kiowa M. in Sac Co. had 4 eggs and later 4 young (M. Mahn fide JJD), and a 7th nest was found at Sweet M. in Bremer Co. (JEd). The only other report was 1 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. on 7 Jul (MCK).
- Cooper's Hawk:** A nest with young at Decorah (T. Sordahl fide DeC) was the only report of nesting. One or 2 were seen in Appanoose, Dickinson, Van Buren, and Winneshiek counties (RLC, DCH, LAS, MPr, DeC).
- Red-shouldered Hawk:** No specific sightings were reported but Jon Stravers indicated that the number of known territories in Iowa now exceeds 40 (J. Stravers fide JJD).
- Broad-winged Hawk:** The only nest reported was n. of Boone (MHa). From 1 to 3 were seen in Allamakee, Boone, Johnson, and Polk counties (DeC, JJD, JLF, KJ, RTh, BE, PJW).
- Swainson's Hawk:** All: 1 or 2 at Smith W.A. in Kossuth Co. from 6 to 17 Jun (MCK) and 1 n. of Mason City on 30 Jun (JLW).
- Merlin:** 1 near Cayler Prairie in Dickinson Co. on 9 Jul (*DCH) seems to be the first July record for Iowa.
- Peregrine Falcon:** Nests in Cedar Rapids and Lansing both fledged 3 young while one in Des Moines was unsuccessful (BEh). Releases of birds continued: 20 at Dubuque, 9 at Effigy Mounds N.M., and 6 at the Louisa Power Plant (BEh). The only "wild" birds reported were 1 at the MidAmerican Energy Ponds on 13 Jun (MPr) and 1 at Hawkeye W.A. on 22 Jul (JLF).
- Gray Partridge:** 1 or 2 adults were seen in Boone, Dickinson, Emmet, Hancock, Kossuth, Marshall counties (MPr, JJD, BPr) and a brood was near Cayler Prairie on 20 Jun (JJD). Schoenewe commented that it was doing well in northwestern Iowa.
- Northern Bobwhite:** The decline of bobwhite seems to be continuing. The only reports were singles near Boies Bend A. in Buchanan Co., on 29 Jun (MPr) and at Polk City on 19 Jul (DT), both somewhat north of its recent range. I assume a few were seen or heard in southern Iowa.
- King Rail:** All: 1 was seen at a pond near Eagle L. in Hancock Co. on 16 Jun (GDo-details).
- Virginia Rail:** All: singles at Otter Creek M. on 13 Jun (MCD), Eagle L. in Hancock Co. on 17 Jun (RGo), and Silver L. in Worth Co. on 17 Jun (RGo). One or 2 were found in wetlands in Clay, Dickinson, Kossuth, and Palo Alto counties (RDa).
- Sora:** Singles were at Eagle L. on 17 Jun (RGo) and Iowa City on 12 Jul (MCD). One or 2 were found in wetlands in Clay, Dickinson, and Kossuth counties (RDa).
- Common Moorhen:** A brood with 8 young was found at Spring Run W.A. in late July (LAS, ETH), and an adult was with 2 young at Forney L. on 5 Jul (BKP, LJP). Also, 1 was at Otter Creek M. on 25 Jun (MPr).
- American Coot:** Nesting was noted at Colo Ponds (HZ), Harrier M. (JJD), and Spring Run W.A. (LAS).
- Sandhill Crane:** A great year for this species. Besides two broods (of 2 and 1 yg.) at Otter Creek M. (Rick Trine, IaDNR), other broods were reported at Big M. in Butler Co. (JEd), Green Island in Jackson Co. (JEd), and near the mouth of the Upper Iowa R. in Allamakee Co. (MPr, BPr). In addition, 2 summered at Cardinal M. (DeC) 6 summered at Big M. (Ryan Harr fide JJD), and 1 was at Eagle L. on 17 Jun (RGo).
- American Golden-Plover:** All: 1 near Iowa Falls in Hardin Co. on 1 Jun (MPr) was the only northbound bird while 1 in basic plumage near Bancroft in Kossuth Co. on 30 Jun (MCK) was the only southbound bird reported.
- Semipalmated Plover:** Singles at the MidAmerican Energy Ponds on 19 Jun (PHA, RIA) and at Errington M. on 20 Jun (BE) were late, early, or lost. The first clear southbound bird was 1 at Cardinal M. on 13 Jul (DeC) and 3 at Harrier M. on 24 Jul (JJD) was the most reported.
- Piping Plover:** 5 pairs were at the MidAmerican Energy Ponds on 9-10 Jun. A nest with 4 eggs and broods of 4 and 1 young were evident, the most nesting activity there in several years (JJD).
- Killdeer:** Most: 108 s. of Iowa City on 24 Jul (MCD).
- Greater Yellowlegs:** 1 at Colo Ponds on 7 Jun (MPr) was the last spring bird. The first and most fall birds were 4 at Riverton W.A. on 10 Jul (BKP, LJP).
- Lesser Yellowlegs:** Other than 1 at Iowa City on 18, 23 Jun (MCD), 1 in Appanoose Co. on 27 Jun was the first (RLC). The 70 near Armstrong in Emmet Co. on 7 Jul (MCK) were the most.
- Solitary Sandpiper:** First: 1 at Welch L. WPA on 28 Jun (LAS). Most: 10 near Armstrong on 7 Jul (MCK).
- Willet:** All: 2 at Forney L. on 5 Jul (BKP, LJP), 7 at Hawkeye W.A. on 31 Jul (MCD), and 3 at Saylorville Res. on 30 Jul (SRO).
- Spotted Sandpiper:** From 1 to 4 were reported in Boone, Polk, and Washington counties (RTh, BE, DCP).
- Upland Sandpiper:** From 1 to 3 were found in Appanoose, Buena Vista, Carroll, Cerro Gordo, Dallas, Davis, Dickinson (nest), Iowa, O'Brien, Polk, and Winneshiek counties (RLC, ETH, RTh,

- RGo, JJD, MPr, NBe, JJo, MCD, DK, DT, L. Reis tide DeC). By far the most reported was 17 at Errington M. on 11 Jul (BE).
- Semipalmated Sandpiper:** Among northbound birds, 24 at Colo Ponds on 7 Jun were the most (MPr) and 3 at Harrier M. on 10 Jun (JJD) were the last. One at Errington M. on 3 Jul (BE) was the first southbound report and 8 at Harrier M. on 17 Jul (RTh) and 8 at Coralville Res. on 21 Jul (THK) were the most.
- Western Sandpiper:** 1 in Clay Co. on 5 Jul (LAS-details)[2nd latest] was the only report.
- Least Sandpiper:** First: 30 near Armstrong (MCK), 30 at Cardinal M. (DeC), and 4 s. of Iowa City (MCD), all on 7 Jul. Most: 50 at Coralville Res. on 21 Jul (THK).
- White-rumped Sandpiper:** Among the several reports of southbound birds, 17 at MidAmerican Energy Ponds on 7 Jun were the most (BKP, LJP) and 4 at Errington M. on 12 Jun (BE) were the last. One at Errington M. on 3 Jul (BE) was incredibly late or early.
- Baird's Sandpiper:** All: 4 at Hanlontown M. on 25 Jul (RGo).
- Pectoral Sandpiper:** 1 at Colo Ponds on 2 Jun (HZ) and 1 at Errington M. on 12 Jun (BE) were the only northbound birds reported. Among southbound birds, 1 on 7 Jul near Armstrong (MCK) was the first and 20 at Coralville Res. on 21 Jul (THK) were the most.
- Dunlin:** 1 at Colo Ponds on 2 Jun (HZ) was the only report.
- Stilt Sandpiper:** First: 1 near Armstrong on 7 Jul (MCK). Most: 19 at Hawkeye W.A. on 26 Jul (MCD).
- Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** All: 1 at Hawkeye W.A. on 29 Jul (JLF) and 16 there on 31 Jul (MCD).
- Ruff:** A first-ever summer report will be referred to the Records Committee.
- Short-billed Dowitcher:** First: 1 near Armstrong (MCK), 2 near Union Hills W.A. in Cerro Gordo Co. (RGo), and 1 at Cardinal M. (DeC), all on 7 Jul. Most: 45 at Coralville Res. on 21 Jul (THK).
- Common Snipe:** All: 1 at Spring Run W.A. on 24 Jul (ETh) is suggestive of local nesting.
- American Woodcock:** All: 1 at Cairo Woods W.A. in Louisa Co. on 5 Jul (MCD) and 1 at Chichaqua W.A. on 19 Jul (DT).
- Wilson's Phalarope:** All: A male at Welch L. WPA on 10 Jul (LAS) and 1 in basic plumage at Harrier M. on 31 Jul (JJD).
- Red-necked Phalarope:** Correction: 1 listed as seen on 10 July 1998 at Maynard Reece W.P.A. (IBL 68:128) actually was seen on 10 June 1998 and is a record late date (MCK).
- Franklin's Gull:** Other than 1 at Saylorville Res. on 11 Jul (BE) all were seen at or near the dump near E. Okoboji with a peak of 100 plus on 10 Jul (LAS).
- Black-headed Gull:** 1 at the dump near E. Okoboji on 10 Jul (*LAS) was the 4th straight summer this species was reported in the Great Lakes region.
- Ring-billed Gull:** Most reports were from the Great Lakes region (peak: 90 e. of Milford on 17 Jun, NBe) or Saylorville Res. (peak: 25 on 11 Jul, BE). About 13 were seen at Meinking M. on 23 Jun but it wasn't clear if they were nesting there or not (JJD). Elsewhere, 2 were at MidAmerican Energy Ponds on 9 Jun (JJD) and 1 was at Coralville Res. on 26 Jul (MCD).
- Herring Gull:** All: A 1st alternate bird near St. Joseph in Kossuth Co. (MCK) and a 2nd alternate bird at Saylorville Res. (BE), both on 17 Jul.
- Caspian Tern:** All: 3 at the MidAmerican Energy Ponds on 13 Jun (MPr), 1 at Lock and Dam 16 in Muscatine Co. on 30 Jun (*GWh), and 1 at Miniwakan S.P. in Dickinson Co. on 7 Jul (MPr).
- Common Tern:** 2 were at Spring Run W.A. on 5 Jun (LAS-details).
- Forster's Tern:** Most reports were from Dickinson Co. where 12 were seen at the dump near E. Okoboji on 23 Jun (JJD) and an adult was feeding young at Spirit L. on 13 Jul (LAS). At least some nesting occurred locally. Other reports were 1 at the MidAmerican Energy Ponds on 13 Jun (MPr), 2 at Union Sl. NWR on 14 Jun (MCK), 3 at Cardinal M. on 17 Jun (DeC), 2 in Appanoose Co. on 27 Jun (RLC), 2 at Forney L. on 10 Jul (BKP, LJP), 6 at Saylorville Res. on 11 Jul (BE), 1 s. of Iowa City on 15 Jul (MCD), and 2 at Dunbar Sl. on 25 Jul (DT). These latter reports probably all were migrants.
- Least Tern:** 15 were at the MidAmerican Energy Pond on 9-10 Jun and 2 nests, each with 3 eggs, were found (JJD). This is the most found at that site in several years.
- Black Tern:** 18 at Colo Ponds on 2 Jun (HZ) and 6 at Forney L. on 13 Jun (MPr) were late migrants while 1 at Bauer Sl. in Hamilton Co. on 30 Jun (HZ), 2 at Harrier M. on 1 Jul (JJD) and 1 there on 18 Jul (DT), 3 at Maynard Reece WPA on 7 Jul (MCK), 4 at Dunbar Sl. on 25 Jul (DT), and 7 at Cardinal M. on 28 Jul (DeC) were probably southbound. In Dickinson County, 10 were at Grover L. on 23 Jun (JJD) and several were seen at Spring Run W.A. where an adult was seen with a young bird in July (LAS). They probably nested at both of those sites. Most: 300 at Saylorville Res. on 30 Jul (SRo).
- Eurasian Collared-Dove:** 4 were at Grinnell on 13 Jun (MCD).
- Black-billed Cuckoo:** 1 or 2 were reported in Boone, Cerro Gordo, Clay, Dallas, Dickinson, and Kossuth counties (RGo, RTh, JJD, LAS, MCK).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: From 1 to 5 were reported from Boone, Butler, Clay, Dallas, Fremont, Hancock, Kossuth, Linn, Marshall, O'Brien, Story, Tama, Taylor, Washington, and Winneshiek counties (JJD, RGo, LAS, BE, MPr, MCK, DLD, DK, DCP, DeC).

Barn Owl: One of the best years on record for this species. Nests at Zelbert Freemyer's farm in Taylor Co. had 5 and 2 young (BEh). Another nest with 3 young was found near Corydon, one near Humeston in Wayne Co. had 7 young, one near Diagonal in Ringgold Co. had 3 young, and a recently fledged young near Carroll gave evidence of a sixth nest (BEh).

Burrowing Owl: 1 seen near Larchwood in Lyon Co. several times in early June (D. Zangger fide DCH) was near where a nest was found in 1998.

Common Nighthawk: Both Kenne and Thompson commented, suggesting that numbers were down from past years (MCK, DT), an observation that matches my own.

Chuck-will's-widow: All: 2 at the usual site near Waubonsie S.P. on 13 Jun (MPr).

Whip-poor-will: No reports.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: From 1 to 4 were found in Allamakee, Clayton, Dallas, Delaware, Dickinson, Hardin, Johnson, Kossuth, Lee, Marshall, and Winneshiek counties (DeC, MPr, BPr, BE, ETh, JJo, MCD, MCK).

Red-headed Woodpecker: Thompson said this species was "almost nonexistent" around Saylorville this year (DT).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: A nest with young at L. Meyer in Winneshiek Co. on 17 Jun (L. Reis fide DeC) was the only report of nesting. Other reports, all singles, were 1 at Cardinal M. on 13 Jul (DeC), 1 at Lansing in Allamakee Co. on 14 Jul (MPr, BPr), and an out-of-place bird n. of Boone on 15 Jun (MHa).

Pileated Woodpecker: Besides singles in Jasper Co. on 8 Jun (RV, CV) and 2 near Hanlontown in Worth Co. on 23 Jun (JLW), a pair fledged 4 young at Ledges S.P. (KJ).

Olive-sided Flycatcher: All: 1 near Algona on 2 Jun (MCK) and 1 at Shimek F. on 15 Jun (MPr) [record latest].

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: All: 3 at A.A. Call S.P. in Kossuth Co. on 2 Jun (MCK).

Acadian Flycatcher: From 1 to 10 were found in Delaware, Jackson, Lee, Louisa, Muscatine, and Van Buren counties (MPr, JLF, CE, MCD, RLC).

Alder Flycatcher: All: 3 on 2 Jun and 1 on 11 Jun at A.A. Call S.P. (MCK).

Willow Flycatcher: From 1 to 7 were found in Allamakee, Appanoose, Iowa, Johnson, Story, Tama, and Winneshiek counties (DeC, RLC, MCD, HZ, MPr).

Least Flycatcher: All: Singles at A.A. Call S.P. (MCK) and Mason City (JLW), both on 2 Jun.

Western Kingbird: Besides the 1 to 3 found in Pottawattamie and Woodbury counties (MPr, JJD, JJo), a family group with 4 young was at its usual state capitol nesting site on 17 Jul (PHA, RIA) and 1 was somewhat east of its usual range near Sutherland in O'Brien Co. on 29 Jul (DK).

Loggerhead Shrike: From 1 to 3 were found in Cerro Gordo, Delaware, Fremont, Guthrie, Hamilton, Iowa, Johnson, Montgomery, Polk, Story (3 sites, one a nest), and Winneshiek counties (RGo, MPr, DT, HZ, MCD, THK, BE, N. Osness fide JJD, DeC).

White-eyed Vireo: 1 from 9 to 17 Jun at Cairo Woods W.A. in Louisa Co. (MCD) was the only report.

Bell's Vireo: From 1 to 5 were found in Adams, Fremont, Iowa, Johnson, Linn, Louisa, Muscatine, Polk, Story, and Winneshiek counties (MPr, MCD, CE, NBe, DLD, BE, DT, JJD, DeC).

Yellow-throated Vireo: 1 or 2 were found in Allamakee, Buchanan, Dallas, Delaware, Hardin, Johnson, Kossuth, Linn, Louisa, Muscatine, Tama, Taylor Van Buren, and Winneshiek counties (DeC, MPr, BE, MCD, MCK, DLD).

Purple Martin: Several observers lamented the shortage of martins (DCe, MCK) while Thompson thought they were more common in the Saylorville area than usual (DT). The largest group reported was 30 at Mason City in July (RGo).

Bank Swallow: Porter noted several groups along the Skunk R. in SE Iowa including 120 near Rome in Henry Co. on 5 Jul (DCP).

Cliff Swallow: The largest groups reported were 1,000 on the Skunk R. in Jefferson Co. (DCP) and 875 nests at the upper end of Saylorville Res. (BE), both in late June.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Singles at Algona on 17 Jun (MCK) and near Boone on 12, 13 Jul (KJ) were the first summer reports since 1993.

Brown Creeper: 1 carrying food near Algona on 2 Jun probably was nesting (MCK), the first summer report away from the Mississippi R. in two years.

Carolina Wren: All: 1 near Argyle in Lee Co. on 15 Jun (MPr), 1 at Fairfield on 18 Jul (DCP), and 1 near Boone on 24 Jul (KJ). Have populations declined after several high years or was it just underreported?

Bewick's Wren: All: 1 on 1 Jul in Diane Porter's yard in Fairfield near where they nested this spring (DCP).

Sedge Wren: Several observers noted their great abundance in northwestern and north-central Iowa this year (NBE, RGo, DCH, MCK). Elsewhere more modest numbers were reported: 4 at Errington M. on 11 Jul (BE), 1 at Iowa City on 2 Jul (MCD), 6 near Marengo on 29 Jun (TCK), 4 in Poweshiek Co. on 17 Jul (RV, CV), and 2 in Van Buren Co. on 25 Jul (RLC). More than 20 were singing at Saylorville Res. on 11 Jul (DT).

Marsh Wren: Outside of NW Iowa where they were common (JJD), 1 was at Errington M. on 3 Jul (BE) and 2 were at Colo Ponds on 18 Jul (HZ).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: 5 pairs were at Wanata S.P. in Clay Co. on 5 Jun (LAS), and they nested at several sites in Kossuth Co. (MCK).

Veery: All: 2 at Ledges S.P. on 7 Jun (KJ), 2 near Saylorville Res. in Dallas Co. on 20 Jun (BE), and 6 at Backbone S.P. in Delaware Co. on 29 Jun (MPr).

Wood Thrush: From 1 to 6 were found in Dallas, Delaware, Fremont, Kossuth, Lee, Linn, Louisa, Marshall, Muscatine, Story, Van Buren, Washington, and Wayne counties (BE, MPr, MCK, CE, NBe, DLD, MCD, BPr, S. Maloy fide JJD, RLC, DCP).

Northern Mockingbird: All: 2 in Iowa Co. on 8 Jun (CE), 1 there on 17 Jun (MCD), 1 in Muscatine Co. on 2 Jul (MCD), and 6 in Appanoose Co. during the summer (RLC).

Blue-winged Warbler: Singles in Shimek F. (MPr) and at Ledges S.P. (JJD) in June were the only reports.

Golden-winged Warbler: A male in eastern Warren Co. on 17, 19 Jun [record latest] was in a brushy pasture usually occupied by Blue-winged Warblers (JSi).

Tennessee Warbler: All: 1 in West Des Moines on 17-18 Jun (PHA, RIA) was late.

Northern Parula: From 1 to 7 were found in Appanoose, Lee, Muscatine, Van Buren, and Washington counties (RLC, CE, MPr, MCD, DCP).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: All: 2 males at Yellow River F. on 23 Jun (DK).

Black-throated Green Warbler: All: a male at A.A. Call S.P. on 3 Jun (MCK) was late.

Yellow-throated Warbler: From 1 to 3 were found in Allamakee, Boone, Fremont, Johnson, and Van Buren counties (MPr, BPr, THK, KJ, RTh, CE). Birds at Lansing in Allamakee Co. and Waubonsie S.P. were at new sites for this species (MPr) and at opposite corners of the state.

Prairie Warbler: None reported.

Cerulean Warbler: From 1 to 3 were found in Appanoose, Boone (2 sites), Clay, Kossuth, Lee, and Louisa counties (RLC, RTh, MHa, LAS, MCK, MPr, MCD).

Black-and-white Warbler: A singing male at West Oak Forest in Mills Co. on 9 Jun (BKP, LJP) was the only report.

American Redstart: 2 or 3 were reported in Allamakee, Appanoose, Boone, Cerro Gordo, Washington, and Winneshiek counties (DeC, RLC, MHa, JLW, DCP), an underrepresentation of its distribution and abundance.

Prothonotary Warbler: From 1 to 5 were found in Appanoose, Boone, Des Moines, and Lee counties (RLC, MHa, KJ, RTh, MCD, CE). One near Sutherland in O'Brien Co. on 17 Jun (DK) was out of its usual range.

Worm-eating Warbler: 2 at Shimek F. on 10 Jul (CE) were the only report.

Ovenbird: From 1 to 3 were reported in Boone, Dallas, Delaware, Fremont, Hardin, Lee, Tama, Van Buren, and Winneshiek counties (KJ, BE, MPr, DeC), like the redstart, an underrepresentation of its distribution.

Louisiana Waterthrush: All: 2 at Ledges S.P. on 5 Jun (KJ), 1 at Shimek S.F. on 15 Jun (MPr), and 6 there on 10 Jul (CE). Was this species hard to find this summer or just underreported?

Kentucky Warbler: From 1 to 8 were found in Appanoose, Johnson, Lee, Louisa, and Van Buren counties (RLC, MCD, CE, MPr).

Common Yellowthroat: A pair in eastern Warren Co. were feeding 2 young cowbirds on 19 Jun (JSi).

Hooded Warbler: All: 2 males at L. Ahquabi S.P. in Warren Co. in June (JSi).

Yellow-breasted Chat: 1 or 2 were found in Johnson, Linn, Louisa, Muscatine (3 sites), and Warren counties (NeB, DLD, MCD, JSi).

Summer Tanager: All: 2 at Sharon Bluffs S.P. in Appanoose Co. on 3 Jun (RLC), 1 at Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. on 14 Jun (MPr), and 2 at Waubonsie S.P. on 11 Jul (RTh). The latter two are regular sites for this species. I also received a late report of an imm. male at Springbrook S.P. on 5-6 May (Don Sievers fide JJD, photos).

Scarlet Tanager: From 1 to 8 were found in Allamakee, Appanoose, Boone, Cerro Gordo, Dallas, Delaware, Fremont, Henry, Jasper, Kossuth, Lee, Linn, Marshall, Tama, Van Buren, and Winneshiek counties (DeC, RLC, KJ, JJD, JLW, BE, MPr, RV, CV, MCK, DLD).

Eastern Towhee: A pair at Smith W.A. in Kossuth Co. was thought to have nested (MCK).

Clay-colored Sparrow: All: 2 males were at Anderson Prairie in Emmet Co. in June (RFI).

- Lark Sparrow:** From 1 to 5 were found in Fremont, Lee, Muscatine, O'Brien, Polk, and Story counties (MPr, MCD, DCH, DT, JJD).
- Lark Bunting:** One reported in early June fits in well with previous records and will be reviewed by the Records Committee.
- Grasshopper Sparrow:** Only Engebretsen who found 10 at Moeckly Prairie near Polk City on 11 Jul (BE) and Bernstein who called it numerous in northwestern Iowa mentioned this species. My impression is that this species is less common now than a decade ago, an impression that Breeding Bird Survey data support.
- Henslow's Sparrow:** More reports of this species than any previous summer. In northern Iowa, 5 males were at Fen Valley in Clay Co. and 2 at Elk Creek M. in Worth Co. (RFI) as well as apparently transient males at Anderson Prairie in Emmet Co., Eagle L. W.A. in Hancock Co., and Meredith M. in Winnebago Co. (RFI). In central Iowa, Olawsky found 5 males at Neal Smith NWR (CO) and in east-central Iowa, as many as 7 were at Pleasant Creek R.A. (DLD) and 1 or 2 were in Iowa Co. (JLF, MCD). In southern Iowa, a few were found in Appanoose, Lucas, Monroe, and Wayne counties (LM) and several were found at the usual sites in Van Buren Co. near L. Sugema and Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. (MPr, RLC). Finally, 1 was at Cairo Woods. W.A. in Louisa Co. on 5, 9 Jul (CE, MCD). That adds up to 14 plus sites for the species this year. Wow!
- White-crowned Sparrow:** A male at Prairie L. in Dickinson Co. on 5 Jun (LAS, details) is only the second Iowa summer report (the other was in 1996).
- Dark-eyed Junco:** 1 near St. Anthony in Marshall Co. on 26 Jun (Linda Kurtz) is only the second mid-summer report for Iowa.
- Blue Grosbeak:** From 1 to 4 were found in Audubon, Boone, Carroll, Fremont, Greene, Mills, Pottawattamie, and Sac counties (RTh, KJ, MPr, PHA, RIA, JJD). Several of those are east of where this species usually is found.
- Dickcissel:** Several observers commented that the Dickcissel was common to numerous this summer.
- Bobolink:** Observers in northwestern (DCH, NBe, LAS) and east-central (DLD, THK) indicated that Bobolinks were quite abundant this year.
- Yellow-headed Blackbird:** Away from its usual strongholds, the only report was that numbers seemed down in Polk County (DT).
- Great-tailed Grackle:** From 1 to 5 were found in Boone, Clay, Calhoun (nesting), Dickinson, Fremont, Greene, Marshall, and Tama counties (JJD, LAS, MPr, MSt, MCD), all counties where it has been found previously.
- Brown-headed Cowbird:** See Common Yellowthroat.
- Orchard Oriole:** From 1 to 4 were found in Appanoose, Cerro Gordo, Crawford, Fremont, Iowa, Johnson, Linn, Louisa, Poweshiek, and Winneshiek counties (RLC, RGo, JLW, MPr, MCD, CE, DLD, RV, CV, L. Reis fide DeC).
- Pine Siskin:** All: 1 near Boone on 9 Jun (KJ), 1 in Algona until 11 Jun (MCK); another elsewhere in Algona seen until 20 Jun probably nested (MCK).

CONTRIBUTORS

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BLACK-NECKED STILTS IN BOONE COUNTY

JAMES J. DINSMORE

On 4 May 1999 I visited the Harrier Marsh Wildlife Area in Boone County to see if any new migrants had arrived. At about 5:25 p.m. I made my last stop at a newly flooded pond east of the main unit. This pond had been a hot spot for migrating waterfowl, and I thought it a likely place to attract a stray heron. I noticed several shorebirds on the back side of the pond and set up my spotting scope to see what they were. As I scanned the back margin of the pond, I was amazed to see two Black-necked Stilts foraging along the edge. With their long, spindly, reddish-pink legs; long, straight, dagger-like bill, and bold black above and white below coloration, their identity was immediately obvious. The only other birds nearby for size comparison were several Wilson's Phalaropes; the stilts towered over them. After watching the stilts for about 10 minutes I returned to Ames where I called the Iowa Birdline and a number of birders. Several other birders were able to see the birds that evening and at least through noon on 6 May when Phil Walsh saw them. Rob Thelen and I could not find them later in the afternoon on 6 May and presumably they left sometime that day.



The first accepted record of Black-necked Stilt in Iowa was in 1984 in Kossuth County. Since then there have been at least six more reports, and the species is now considered casual in the state. All except one of the records have been from mid April to late May so this report fits that pattern well.

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BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK IN LOUISA COUNTY

THOMAS H. KENT

On 3 May 1999, I received an e-mail message from Jim Dinsmore that included a message from Bill Ohde (Wildlife Biologist, Iowa DNR) concerning a videotape he had seen of a Black-bellied Whistling-Duck in Louisa County taken by Ted Allen. Jim Fuller contacted Mr. Allen. Jim and I went to the location, which is 2 miles north of Columbus Junction, on 4 and 5 May and searched in vain for the bird for several hours in the backwater and surrounding areas. We talked to Mr. Allen and viewed the videotape on 5 May. He indicated that the bird was seen by his brother on 4 May just after we left.



The bird was probably first seen in early April and the videotape made on a Sunday, probably 25 April. The bird rested on logs on the edge of a small backwater slough that is situated between highway 70 and the Iowa River, often with Wood

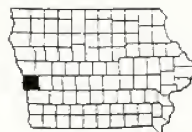
Ducks. It was easily spooked. The videotape showed a duck with long legs and long neck standing on a small log by the water. It had tan and black underparts, gray face, dark cap, and orange bill. At the end of the sequence, the bird takes flight and displays a large white wing patch. Although there was considerable camera movement, the image size and brightness were adequate to see the bird reasonably well. The videotape was taken from an upstairs window.

211 Richards St., Iowa City 52246

WHOOPING CRANES IN HARRISON COUNTY

MINDY L. SHEETS AND JAMES J. DINSMORE

On 9 April 1999, Sheets got a call from a local farmer informing her that there were six large white birds near DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge. Sheets drove to the field, just east of the refuge boundary, and found six Whooping Cranes. The farmer was very excited to learn that the birds were Whooping Cranes. He had originally seen the birds as they emerged from the fog only 50 yards from his kitchen window. The cranes had then moved farther into the large agricultural field away from the road. Sheets watched the birds for several hours and eventually was able to read the band number on one of the birds. Tom Stein of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas was contacted. The three-inch white band (o-W) identified the bird as a female hatched in 1986.



Sheets called Dinsmore later that morning. Ironically, he had just returned from Omaha but he immediately drove back to Missouri Valley. Arriving there at about 4:30 p.m., he found the birds just where they had been originally reported, in a large flat, open, stubble field. The birds were spread out somewhat but appeared to be in three pairs. Their large size, long legs and neck and droopy folded wings easily identified them as cranes. They were mostly white colored with black evident on the tips of the wings, and the top and back of the head. None had any brown or rust color on their body, suggesting that they were all adults.

The birds spent their time slowly moving across the field, foraging by probing with their bill in the soil. Earlier in the day, they had displayed for a while, jumping in the air and calling.

The birds remained in that field or nearby ones for the next several days and were seen by a number of individuals (see cover photo). In the morning of 12 April, Sheets saw them flying out of the refuge over the headquarters of DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge around 11 a.m. However, they encountered a flock of Double-crested Cormorants and followed the cormorants back to the refuge. They were not seen again and evidently left the area to continue their northward migration.

In presettlement times, Whooping Cranes nested across much of north-central Iowa. The last report of a nest in Iowa was near Hayfield in Hancock County in 1894. There were a few reports of migrant Whooping Cranes after that; single reports in 1904, 1911, and 1972 (Kent and Dinsmore 1996) and then two more reports in the fall of 1998 (Dinnes 1999, Keys 1999). The six birds reported here plus another report in Page County at the same time (Kent 1999) were the third and fourth reports of Whooping Cranes in about five months after a long hiatus with no reports. As with the birds seen in fall 1998, the arrival of the spring birds seemed to be associated with the weather. On the day before these birds were first found, a violent

storm from the southwest had swept across Iowa, bringing torrential rain, high winds, and a few tornadoes to western Iowa. Presumably, the cranes were blown into Iowa with that storm.

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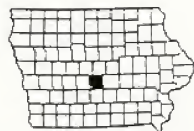
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DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge, 1434 316th Lane, Missouri Valley, IA 51555-7033 and 4024 Arkansas Drive, Ames, IA 50014

ARCTIC TERNS AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR: A FIRST FOR IOWA

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE AND JAMES J. DINSMORE

On 18-19 August 1999, we observed two different Arctic Terns at Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County. In this note, we provide details of these sightings and comment on the species' occurrence in midcontinental United States.



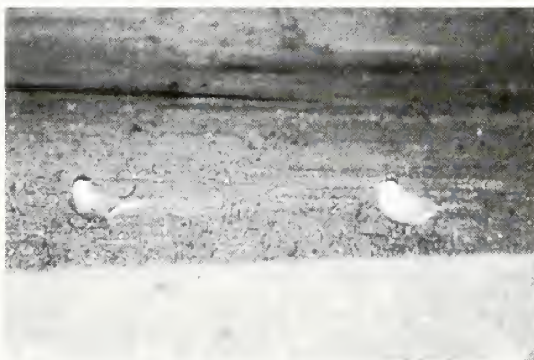
At approximately 5:30 p.m. on 18 August 1999, we stopped at the Sandpiper Beach Recreation Area of Saylorville Reservoir. The small flock of gulls and Forster's Terns included nothing unusual. As we were about to leave, two more "white" terns landed on the beach. One bird was clearly a Forster's Tern, but the other bird appeared smaller and darker. Thinking the second bird might be an Arctic Tern we approached closer on foot. While perched, the bird's smaller size, darker gray underparts, and white cheek stood out among the Forster's Terns. We estimated the bird was 10-15% smaller than a Forster's Tern. The bill was a deep red color, much darker than the orange bill of a Forster's Tern. The bill was very short; we estimated it was roughly 80-90% of the length of the head. The cap was black with a small area of white at the base of the upper mandible. The breast and belly were dark gray and contrasted with the white cheek. The legs were a deep red color, not orange like the legs of a Forster's Tern. The legs were about 50-60% as long as and noticeably thinner than the legs of a Forster's Tern. At rest, the mantle and upperwings were dark gray except that the outer web of the outermost primary was black. In flight, the upperwing appeared uniformly dark gray and the underwing was white with dark tips to the outermost primaries forming a narrow trailing edge. The tail streamers appeared white and extended well beyond the wingtips at rest. We aged the bird as an adult that was just beginning the molt to basic plumage. We studied and photographed the Arctic Tern at close range until 5:55 p.m. when a boat spooked the terns and they flew to the northwest, up the lake.

Research after the sighting revealed that a complete molt to basic plumage in Arctic Terns does not take place until they reach the wintering grounds (Olsen and Larsson, *Terns of Europe and North America*, Princeton Univ. Press, 1995). Common Terns appear to have an earlier molt cycle and would be expected to have

considerably more white on the forehead at this time. Therefore, a tern in nearly full alternate plumage at this date and location is more suggestive of Arctic Tern.

Extensive searches of the reservoir over the next three days failed to locate the bird, except for a possible sighting on the 20th. North winds late on the 18th and all day on the 19th were probably responsible for the bird's rapid departure.

On 19 August 1999, while searching for the adult Arctic Tern, we located two distant white terns feeding south of Cherry Glen Recreation Area at approximately 6:00 p.m. These were the only white terns we had seen all day. Accompanied by several other birders, we drove to Cherry Glen to get a closer look at the birds. At 6:20 p.m., both birds landed on the shoreline south of the jetty and we initially assumed both were juvenile Forster's Terns. When they resumed feeding, it was apparent



*Arctic Tern (left) and Forster's Tern (right)
at Saylorville Reservoir, 18 August 1999.
Photo by Stephen J. Dinsmore*

that one of the birds was not a Forster's Tern. In flight, the bird's smaller size, darker gray upperwings, contrasting dark secondary coverts, and thin dark trailing edge to the underside of the primaries were evident. We began to suspect that this might be a different Arctic Tern from the bird seen the day before. After about 15 minutes, both birds landed out of sight approximately 300 meters south of the jetty. Joined by Tom Kent, Jim Sinclair, and Dick Tetrault, we approached on foot to within 100 meters of the terns and studied them until 7:40 p.m. At this distance, the bird in question was easily identified as a juvenile Arctic Tern. We estimated this bird was at least 10% smaller than the Forster's Tern. The bill was at least 25% shorter and slightly thinner. The bill was black with a hint of orange color near the base of the lower mandible. The head was very rounded with a steep forehead. The eye was dark and appeared large relative to the size of the head. The bird had a sharply defined black "cap"—the crown, nape, and auricular area were solid black, except for some white flecks on the anterior portion of the crown. The forehead was white. The area surrounding the eye was black. The underparts, including the throat, breast, belly, and vent, were white, but slightly darker than those of the Forster's Tern. When perched, the mantle and upperwings appeared uniformly dark gray (noticeably darker than the Forster's Tern) with an indistinct dark shoulder bar and a black outer web to the outermost primary. The wing coverts and tertials were prominently edged with white. In flight, the upperwing was dark gray with the black secondary coverts forming a darker leading edge to the wing. The underwing was white with black tips to the outer primaries, creating a thin dark trailing edge to the underwing. The flight behavior was also different from that of a Forster's Tern; the wingbeats were shallower and the inner part of the wing seemed much shorter. We also noted that this bird had a more short-necked or hunchbacked appearance in flight when compared to the Forster's Tern. When perched, we noted that the legs were about half the length of the legs of the Forster's Tern and noticeably thinner. The legs were dark red or reddish-orange in color. On the basis of the plumage, we concluded this bird was an Arctic Tern in fresh juvenal plumage. Juvenile Arctic Terns, like adults, do not molt to first-basic plumage until they reach the wintering grounds (Olsen and Larsson,

1995). Like the adult, this bird was not seen on subsequent days despite thorough searches of the reservoir.

These sightings represent the first and second reports of Arctic Tern for Iowa. There are numerous records of Arctic Terns from the midcontinent, but most are from states bordering the Great Lakes. Based on this pattern of vagrancy, we expected this species to eventually occur in Iowa. Most records are from spring (May and June) especially late spring. The few fall records are scattered from mid-July through October. We thank Tom Kent for providing us with a summary of Arctic Tern records for the midcontinent United States.

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BOOK REVIEW

Field Guide to the Birds of North America, third edition, by Jon L. Dunn, Jonathan K. Alderfer, and Paul E. Lehman, chief consultants. National Geographic Society, Washington D.C. 1997. 480 pp., 200+ color plates, softbound, \$21.95.

The second edition of this guide has been extensively used for 12 years, rightly holding the title of THE field guide for birders moving beyond the beginning levels of birding. Over the years, my copy filled to bursting with scribbled notes, article clippings, photos, and "improvements" to illustrations. With advances continually being made in field identification, the time has finally come for a "new" third edition, and in this review, I will highlight some of the changes.

The maps use an easier-to-read color scheme, and they synthesize information from a wide array of sources. Continent-wide maps may not be as detailed as the data found in state bird books, breeding bird atlases, and bird-finding guides, but they are still more easily accessible to many birders.

The text has been reworked for many species, reflecting advances made in the last decade, and includes 80 new species, the latest AOU splits, and changes in species order. Most of the new species are borderline vagrants and locally naturalized introductions found in South Florida and Southern California; fantasy birds for those Iowa birders who don't travel widely. The species accounts have been broken into handy sections by bold-facing key words of gender, age, season, range, and calls.

The backbone of this latest edition, and the part generating the most comment, is the new artwork. Finally, an excellent set of plates shows Empidonax flycatchers as they actually appear in life. Many other new plates are extremely useful to Iowa birders, including loons, shorebirds, gulls, thrushes, orioles, and meadowlarks. Technically, the artwork is outstanding, but beauty is in the eye of the beholder. One person's favorite plate has been completely redone, while the next person's least favorite figures have been ignored. Thirty-five new plates were commissioned (all that budget allowed), and new figures were inserted between old, with an unevenness that follows from using many different artists' viewpoints. The original plates were digitally remastered, making them much sharper and allowing the correction of many small details, such as eye color, wingtip pattern, and bill color. There is a shift in overall color on some older plates that gives yellows a brownish tinge, and grays a bluish cast. For instance, the Long-billed Thrasher is a bird that definitely needs its tint button twisted. Hopefully, this problem will be corrected in later printing runs, because it causes some confusion. Maybe the greatest impact of the gray shift and the mixing of old and new figures is on one of the basics of gull identification: the

comparison of the shades of gray of the mantles.. The Mew Gulls in my copy have three different shades of gray on the mantle, one of which is actually paler than one of the two shades of Ring-billed Gull mantles on the same page, neither of which matches the mantle color of the Herring Gull as it should. Gulls are already hard enough without pulling this rug from under you!

Color problems aside, I think this new edition does a good job of incorporating advances and mirrors the growth in knowledge among the birding community since the second edition. While it may not be the guide to start with as a novice, this third edition is now a much sharper tool to use when a birder wants to identify more birds.--Matthew C. Kenne, 709 N. Phillips, Algona, IA 50511

I.O.U. BUSINESS

FALL BUSINESS MEETING

Ottumwa, 11 September 1999, 3:00-3:50 p.m.

Mark Proescholdt, presiding

Hank Zaletel moved approval of the minutes of the Spring 1999 business meeting. Seconded by Francis Moore. Passed.

Treasurers Report: There is \$9,100.26 in the checking account and \$35,000+ in Certificates of Deposit.

Committee Reports

Records Committee: Bob Cecil reported that there was nothing to report.

Membership Committee: No report.

Newsletter: Zaletel reminded members to send in articles.

IOU Birdline: Jim Fuller commented that things are changing with the addition of the listserv, and he is now using reports from IA-Bird, and he is able to keep birding reports up-to-date more easily now. Jim wondered about the future of the phone birdline as many people are using the internet site.

Technology Committee: Ann Johnson reported that she has heard from birders as far away as Finland and feels the IOU website is a great addition to exchange of information. She and Dixie Overton are going to meet soon. Johnson is still looking for people to write articles and provide maps on best birding areas around the state. She thinks that the capabilities and possibilities are numerous for future uses of the website. It is hoped that field reports might be reported through the site in the future.

Johnson reported that Des Moines Audubon will hold a field trip to Snake Creek Marsh on 18 September.

Zaletel reported that 15 copies of the new education book were sold recently. All of the wildlife trunks are now acquired and at the Area Education Agency districts.

The Spring Bird Count will be the second Saturday of May. Contact Ann Barker. These counts are similar to the Christmas Bird Count but are done on a countywide basis.

Proescholdt reminded members about field reports and stated that a replacement will be needed for Tom Kent to compile the fall and spring field reports. Tom is retiring from these duties after many years.

Upcoming Meetings: Proescholdt reported that Camp EWALU near Strawberry Point has been reserved for 19-21 May 2000 and asked for approval. Moved by Zaletel, second Tom Johnson. Passed.

Old Business: None

New Business

An editor for Iowa Bird Life is still needed as Jim Dinsmore is retiring.

Announcements

Proescholdt thanked Darleen Ayres, Nelson Hoskins, and the Ottumwa Bird Club for their hospitality for the Fall meeting.

Dick Tetrault requested that the IOU investigate sponsoring trips, such as the trip to Mexico and Duluth.

Proescholdt expressed concern about liability for the organization and the board members. Tetrault suggested this would be a way to build membership and that IOU could consider subsidizing such

trips. Ann Johnson will help look into the liability issue. Kay Niyo reported that Big Bluestem Audubon Society carries a liability insurance policy for about \$200 per year. Proescholdt said proposals for activities such as sponsored trips must go to the board for consideration and asked Tetrault to put together proposals for the board to consider.

There was discussion about Kellerton Bird Conservation Area. Charlie Winterwood (second, Carol Berrier) moved for the board to consider a donation to Kellerton Bird Conservation Area. Unanimous. Information about KBCA will be provided to Zaletel for the newsletter to educate the members about this project.

Discussion followed about the approval process for projects. Requests for over \$500 must go to the board first for approval and then come back to the membership. The board has budgeted \$1,000 the last few years for projects.

Kelly McKay reported that Paul Zeph with Iowa Audubon has volunteered to work with the Iowa Partners in Flight program. McKay said the Iowa project needed direction as it had fallen behind since Lisa Hemesath left the state. Proescholdt stated that if Paul wanted to work with the PIF program, that would be great. Tom Johnson moved (second Zaletel) to write Zeph informing him. Motion passed.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Ten years is a long time. As I indicated earlier, this is my last issue as editor of *Iowa Bird Life*. I have really enjoyed the opportunity to work on the journal of this fine organization and know that I will look back on these years as some great ones. In this last issue I have a number of thank yous and comments to make.

First, I thank the many people who have taken the time to write articles for the journal. Put bluntly, without writers, there would not be a journal. The people who have written the various seasonal articles--field reports, Christmas Bird Count summary, and spring bird count summary--have provided a backbone of material for each issue of *Iowa Bird Life*. Thus I give my sincerest thanks to Ross Silcock, the late Pete Petersen, Tom Kent, Jim Fuller, Steve Dinsmore, Bob Cecil, Carl Bendorf, and Ann Barker. Their articles have been informative, timely, and a tremendous contribution to Iowa's birding community. I have also worked with four I.O.U. secretaries, five treasurers, and three presidents. They all have been great to work with, in particular in providing good sets of minutes, treasurers reports, and other I.O.U. business items that have appeared in the journal. These officers include Pam Allen, Ann Barker (in two roles), Phyllis Brooks, Jane Clark, Rita Goranson, Mary Kuhlman, Francis Moore, Mark Proescholdt, Jim Scheib, Hilda Sickels, and Carol Thompson. Bob Cecil and Hank Zaletel have been great in helping to solicit and often write articles about Iowa birders or birding areas. Their efforts are especially appreciated. Over the ten years, including the seasonal and organizational articles mentioned above, by my count, about 460 articles involving more than 130 authors have appeared in the pages of *Iowa Bird Life*. That is a lot of people and paper to deal with but I can say that without fail, those dealings have been pleasurable. I do appreciate the time and effort these people have made to make these contributions to the journal. People have been positive about the comments I have provided and prompt in getting material to me. In all, that has made my job much easier and to all of you, I again offer my thanks.

Although I am hesitant to single out individuals, I would be remiss if I did not mention the efforts of Tom Kent and Steve Dinsmore. Tom's 20-year legacy as a field report editor ends with the next issue of *Iowa Bird Life* while Steve continues on as editor of the Christmas Bird Count. Tom and Steve each have contributed more than 50 articles, notes, and reports to the pages of *Iowa Bird Life* in the past 10 years, an amazing contribution. It also attests to the great deal of time they spend in the field and the long series of finds they have made. Put another way, the pages of *Iowa Bird Life* would have been much thinner without their efforts.

One item that I did add to the pages of *Iowa Bird Life* has been a short feature on Fifty Years Ago in *Iowa Bird Life*. I have enjoyed looking back to see where birding was 50 years ago and seeing the changes. These include changes in birding equipment, our ability to travel, and in the birds themselves. Ironically, the feature article in this issue covers exactly that topic by one of our leading birders, Tom Kent. Despite the changes mentioned above, it is interesting to note the continued long-time interest in birds and birding by a core of Iowans over these years. The fact that they were able to start a solid journal in the 1930s and keep it going, first through the Depression and then through the Second World War seems amazing to me. Money was scarce and some of the issues were pretty thin, but still the journal kept going as a means of reporting and keeping contact with the members. Unlike many other state journals, *Iowa Bird Life* seemed to always come out on time and not rely on double issues to get caught up. That tradition continued on through the editorships of Fred Pierce, Pete Petersen, and Tom Kent.

As I look back on the ten years, I am reminded of the long service of the editors who preceded me. In 69 years, the journal has had only four editors, an amazing record. It helps when you have two editors who served for 30 (Fred Pierce) and 25 (Peter Petersen) years and it makes my 10 years look pretty mediocre. Sadly, both Fred and Pete passed away on my watch. They both contributed greatly to the organization through their long service and their work in helping the journal grow. In September 1986, when the I.O.U. met in Cedar Falls, the five authors of *Iowa Birds* were present and had several photographs taken. Fortuitously, in one of those photos we also included Fred Pierce and Philip DuMont (who had written a book on Iowa birds in the 1930s). I thought it was appropriate to include that photo here as I believe it is the only one that includes the first four editors of *Iowa Bird Life*.



From left: James J. Dinsmore, Dean M. Roosa, Fred J. Pierce, Peter C. Petersen, Philip A. DuMont, Darwin Koenig, and Thomas H. Kent. Cedar Falls, 1986, Photo by Hank Zaletel.

Finally, in looking ahead, I want to say a bit about the selection of our new editor, Kay Niyo. To say that the process was lengthy is an understatement. However, I believe that two people, Mark Proescholdt and Erv Klaas, deserve most of the credit for the eventual selection of Kay. From September 1998 when I first indicated that I wished to step down as editor, Mark has taken the leadership role in finding a new editor. Mark received many suggestions of possible editors but for many months no one seemed interested in the job. Finally, last March, Mark and the Board asked me to put a notice in *Iowa Bird Life* asking for members to send in their suggestions of possible editors. By doing so, we wanted to make sure that the entire membership felt that they could contribute and, more importantly, we wanted to make sure that we were not overlooking a good candidate who had not already been considered. So far as I know, we received only one response to that solicitation. A few days after the notice was published, Erv Klaas, a longtime colleague of mine at Iowa State and also a member of the I.O.U. asked me "What about Kay Niyo?" Kay was exactly the type of person we had in mind when we published the notice; an active birder with great editorial and computer skills but not well known to most in the I.O.U. And of course, I, having known Kay for about 20 years, was the person who had overlooked her. It took a while to get working on Kay but eventually Mark and also Steve Dinsmore talked to her and got her interested in the editorship. By the time I talked to her in September, she seemed ready to take on the task. I am delighted to pass on the editorship of *Iowa Bird Life* to Kay Niyo. I know that others in the organization will quickly discover what I already know, that we are fortunate to have such a skilled and enthusiastic person as editor of our journal.--jjd

MEET KAY NIYO

Kay Niyo (knee-oh), the new editor of *Iowa Bird Life*, is a native of South Dakota. Her education covers several fields of study, starting with a B.S. in zoology at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion. She moved to Ames in 1969 and in 1984 received a M.S. in General Graduate Studies with an emphasis on plant pathology. She continued her education and in 1987 received the Ph. D., majoring in Immunobiology. She worked at the National Animal Disease Center in Ames for several years, but has worked at the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST) in Ames since 1988. During most of that time she has served as Managing Scientific Editor for the council. CAST is a nonprofit consortium of 38 scientific societies that identifies food and fiber, environmental, and other agricultural issues and interprets related scientific research information for legislators, regulators, and the media for use in public policy decision making. One of their main activities is to produce reports on current issues (recent topics include biodiversity, hypoxia, and invasive species) emphasizing the latest scientific information. In her role as Managing Scientific Editor, Kay has developed great skills at working with diverse writers (reports have a task force of scientists as authors), editing complex material into language that is both scientifically accurate and readable by the general public, and mastering the ever changing world of computer-based writing and publishing.

Kay has been active with numerous groups in Ames. Included among these are the Quality of Life Committee of the Ames City Council and Big Bluestem Audubon Society. With the latter group, Kay has been on the Board of Directors and currently is President of the group. Those who know Kay realize that although she has been a birder since the 1960s, her birding activity has been especially active in the past few years. Among other places, she has visited Costa Rica, Manitoba, southern Texas, Arizona, Idaho, and Oregon in recent years and has managed to get in quite a bit of birding in those areas. With a daughter in Portland, Oregon, and sons in Boise, Idaho, and Detroit,

Kay has been able to combine visits to her family with an excuse to bird in some interesting parts of the country. I know that all of the members of the I.O.U. join me in welcoming Kay as the new editor of *Iowa Bird Life*.-jjd



New Iowa Bird Life Editor, Kay Niyo



A parliament of owls. With thanks to two accomplished photographers of Iowa birds. Finis.





The IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, founded in 1923, encourages interest in the identification, study, and protection of birds in Iowa and seeks to unite those who have these interests in common. *Iowa Bird Life* and *I.O.U. News* are quarterly publications of the Union.

EDITORIAL STAFF

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Editor as of 1 January 2000: Kay Niyo, 1531 Stone Brooke Rd., Ames, 50010 (kniyo@aol.com)

Ann Barker, Spring Bird Count Editor, 25368 250th St., Princeton, IA 52768-9720

Robert Cecil, Winter Field Reports Editor, 1315 41st St., Des Moines, IA 50311

James J. Dinsmore, Summer Field Reports Editor, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014

Stephen J. Dinsmore, Christmas Bird Count Editor, 612 1/2 W. Magnolia St., Fort Collins, CO 80521

Matthew C. Kenne, Spring Field Reports Editor, 709 N. Phillips, Algona, IA 50511

Thomas H. Kent, Fall Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City, IA 52246

MEMBERSHIP/SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Institutions may subscribe to *Iowa Bird Life* for \$20 per year. Individuals may join the Iowa Ornithologists' Union according to the following membership classes: Regular (\$20); Regular as spouse or minor child of another Regular member without publications (\$4 first additional family member, \$2 each additional family member); Contributing (\$20 plus any additional tax-deductible contribution to the I.O.U.); and Life (\$500 as single payment or \$125 for each of four years). Members will also receive the quarterly *I.O.U. News* and are eligible to vote and hold office in the Union. Send subscriptions, membership payments, or address changes to Curt Nelson or Marty Pauley, 22675 Spruce Ave., Mason City, IA 50401 (e-mail: MPauley@jumpgate.net).

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Original manuscripts, notes, letters (indicate if for publication), editorials, and other materials relating to birds and bird finding in Iowa should be sent to the editor. Accepted manuscripts will generally be published promptly, depending on space available, with the following absolute deadlines: 15 November for the Winter issue; 15 February for the Spring issue; 15 May for the Summer issue; and 15 July for the Fall issue. Most manuscripts will be refereed. All material should be typed double-spaced or hand printed in ink on 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper. Authors should pattern their style after a current issue of the journal. If you want more detailed guidelines or advice regarding the appropriateness of your topic for *Iowa Bird Life*, contact the editor. Manuscripts may also be submitted on computer disk (Word 4.0 for Macintosh or compatible programs). Please submit one printed copy of the manuscript with the disk.

OFFICERS OF THE IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

Mark Proescholdt, President (2001), Box 65, Liscomb, IA 50148

Tom Johnson, Vice-President (2001), 532 120th Avenue, Norwalk, IA 50211

Jane Clark, Secretary (2000), 9871 Lincoln Avenue, Clive, IA 50325

Rita Goranson, Treasurer (2000), 115 Lakeview Drive, Mason City, IA 50401

Other members of the Board of Directors: Dan Dorrance (2000), Maridel Jackson (2001), Curt Nelson (2001), James Scheib (2000), and Phil Walsh (2001).

STANDING COMMITTEES

Publications: Harold White (chair), Ann M. Barker, Dan Dorrance, Jim Durbin, Ron Muilenburg

Records: Thomas H. Kent (secretary), Robert I. Cecil, Chris Edwards, James L. Fuller, Matthew C. Kenne, W. Ross Silcock, and James Sinclair.

Membership: Barb Bettis, Carol Berrier, Maridel Jackson, and Rita Goranson.

Library/Historical: Barb Bettis, Dennis Carter, Sue Spieker, Jan Walters, Hank Zaletel.

UPCOMING MEETINGS OF IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

19-21 May 2000, Camp Ewalu, Strawberry Point

FIELD REPORTS

Anyone observing birds in Iowa is encouraged to report their findings on a quarterly basis to the Field Reports editors. Sample reporting and documentation forms suitable for duplication are available from the editor (send self-addressed stamped envelope to Jim Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014). An article describing the reporting process is also available.

Deadlines for receipt of field reports are as follows:

- *Winter (Dec, Jan, Feb)--3 March (Robert Cecil, 1315 41st St., Des Moines, IA 50311)
- *Spring (Mar, Apr, May)--3 June (Matthew C. Kenne, 709 N. Phillips, Algona, IA 50511)
- *Summer (Jun, Jul)--3 August (James J. Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014)
- *Fall (Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov)--3 December (Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246)

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

*Deadline for receipt of reports: 15 January. For forms and instructions write: Stephen J. Dinsmore, 612 1/2 W. Magnolia, Fort Collins, CO 80521.

IOWA BIRDLINE 319-338-9881

The birdline is a recorded summary of interesting recent bird sightings in Iowa. At the end of the report you can leave a message and report recent sightings. Be sure to give your name and phone number as well as the location of the bird and date seen. Call in as soon as possible after sighting a rare bird. Jim Fuller checks the reports daily and updates the recording on Monday, so make sure Sunday sightings are reported by Sunday night.

I.O.U. HOMEPAGE: <http://www.iowabirds.org/>

I.O.U. NEWS

Send items of interest for the newsletter to the editors (Hank and Linda Zaletel, 1928 6th St., Nevada, IA 50201).

MATERIALS AVAILABLE

Back issues of *Iowa Bird Life* are available through the editorial office. For order form, send self-addressed envelope to: Iowa Bird Life, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014.

Field Checklist of Iowa Birds--1999 Edition: 5 for \$1.50, postpaid and other I.O.U. materials are available from Maridel Jackson, 410 SW Westview Dr., Ankeny, IA 50021-2727 (mpwj@gateway.net). Also available at annual meetings.

REPORTING NEBRASKA BIRDS

Sightings of Nebraska birds, including those within the Nebraska portion of DeSoto N.W.R., should be reported to Loren and Babs Padelford, 1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, NE 68005. Formats for reporting and documentation are the same as for Iowa. The Nebraska Bird Line, available 24 hours a day, is 402-292-5325. Iowa birders are encouraged to report their Nebraska sightings to this number.

ADDRESS CHANGES

Please send address changes/corrections to Marty Pauley, 22675 Spruce Ave., Mason City, IA 50401

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